Oral History Summary

When we were given this assignment, I had no idea what I was going to do. The more that I thought about it, I still had no clue where exactly I was going to go with this project or what the point of it was. I can see where it might be an interesting project for middle school or high school aged students who have families that they can reach out to, but for a person in her mid thirties, who already knows more than she cares to about the not close family that she comes from, not such a great project. In my honest opinion, I think this project would have to be thought about carefully before it was assigned in a lot of classrooms, because parents might not be willing to share, or happy with what their child dug up.

I chose to interview my mother because, to be honest, she was the only option. Both sets of my grandparents have been dead for many years. I don’t speak to my father, and, therefore, I don’t speak to any of his siblings. My mom rarely speaks to and I never speak to any of her five brothers that are still alive. She chose to lead a different type of life than they did, and she didn’t want to expose her children to the lifestyle that her brothers chose. Of my nine uncles, only three had children, and since I’m not close to the uncles, I’m not close to my cousins. So, as you can see, there really isn’t anybody else for me to interview.

I already knew a lot of what my mom told me in her interview, like the fact that she had a very rough childhood, but hearing her take on some of the historical events she remembered was kind of interesting. That is why I have decided to do my oral history presentation as a timeline of major events in history that she remembers, as well as those that I remember. I’m not 100% sure of the personal impact of all of those historical events, but it is interesting to see what a person has experienced and lived through.

Interview:

 What is your full name? Why did your parents select this name for you? Did you have a nickname?

Violet Betty Parrish, it was a compromise between the names picked by my parents. I was named after 1 sister on each side. Mother’s sister = Betty, Father’s sister = Violet. Nicknames = sissy, snookie

 When and where were you born?

November 19, 1949 in Detroit, Michigan

Moved to California at 3 years old and then back to MI in 1st grade, then to TN, back to MI, and then back CA in 1957, etc. We moved a lot, too many places to remember, let alone list. I went to 7 schools in 1 year, but I can’t remember which year.

 How did your family come to live there?

No idea, but probably because that is where the jobs were. A lot of southern people moved to Detroit because that is where the car companies were and therefore the jobs. Father worked for Dodge and Ford.

 Were there other family members in the area? Who?

Father’s brother, Mother’s sister, Grandmother on mom’s side in Michigan

In CA, Father’s side sister and father

 What was the house (apartment, farm, etc.) like? How many rooms? Bathrooms? Did it have electricity? Indoor plumbing? Telephones?

Lived in a house, 2 bedrooms, had electricity and plumbing first time in CA. After that, lived in houses and apartments both. Always had electricity and indoor plumbing. Lived in Hawaiian Gardens, CA before there were streets and sidewalks.

 Were there any special items in the house that you remember?

No

 What is your earliest childhood memory?

Almost getting kidnapped at 3 years old. Market was down the corner and turn left. Mom would call market owner and tell him Violet was on her way, mom would watch to the corner and market owner would watch after Violet turned the corner. On 3rd bday market owner was busy and as Violet was walking to market, a couple in a car started talking to her, telling her what a pretty little girl she was and tried to get her to get in the car with them. Luckily, the market owner finally came out and asked what was going on and the couple drove away.

 Describe the personalities of your family members.

Mother – bossy, domineering towards most people except her own husbands.

6 Brothers – all very domineering, wild, bad influences on each other, what one didn’t think of the other one would.

Father – had no personality, just smoked and drank

 What kind of games did you play growing up?

Hide and seek, Mother may I, Monopoly, Michigan rummy, poker

 What was your favorite toy and why?

Don’t remember having toys, stereo in high school cuz she could listen to the Beatles, books

 What was your favorite thing to do for fun (movies, beach, etc.)?

Read because it took her away

 Did you have family chores? What were they? Which was your least favorite?

Yes, all of the household chores because she was the only girl and at the time it was the girl’s responsibility, boys were to be waited on. She would be ironing and brothers would be outside playing and making fun of her because she couldn’t go outside to play. Least favorite = washing dishes because there were so many to wash.

 Did you receive an allowance? How much? Did you save your money or spend it?

No

 What was school like for you as a child? What were your best and worst subjects? Where did you attend grade school? High school? College?

Loved school until she got to high school, always the first one done, and would try to help others, considered SRAs a reward. Best = reading, Worst = math. High school = Hawthorne, CA, grade school = all over the country, college = Long Beach, CA (LBCC) and Santa Barbara, CA (UCSB)

 What school activities and sports did you participate in?

None

 Do you remember any fads from your youth? Popular hairstyles? Clothes?

Bell bottoms, beehives, ironing hair with an actual iron so it would be straight

 Who were your childhood heroes?

Anne Frank, Helen Keller because they lived through or during horrible things/times and overcame it

 What were your favorite songs and music?

The Beatles and Elvis, anything by them

 Did you have any pets? If so, what kind and what were their names?

A duck she got for Easter, named her Fluffy, only had her a week or two

 What was your religion growing up? What church, if any, did you attend?

Baptized Baptist, didn’t attend a church regularly

 Were you ever mentioned in a newspaper?

No

 Who were your friends when you were growing up?

Brothers, were also her enemies

 What world events had the most impact on you while you were growing up? Did any of them personally affect your family?

Vietnam war = affected her because people she went to school with fought and died there, Kennedy’s election, Kennedy’s assassination, Watts Riots = affected family because they had to stay inside their home and could see where National Guard was staying at the Hollywood Racetrack in Inglewood down the street, could see the smoke from the fires

 Describe a typical family dinner. Did you all eat together as a family? Who did the cooking? What were your favorite foods?

Mom did the cooking, family sat down to eat together. Spaghetti was and is favorite food. Wild and crazy with everybody talking at once, half the time brothers were throwing things at each other and trying to take each other’s food

 How were holidays (birthdays, Christmas, etc.) celebrated in your family? Did your family have special traditions?

Other than traditional foods on the holidays, no traditions. Presents and dinner.

 How is the world today different from what it was like when you were a child?

Extremely different in terms of technology. Kids don’t go outside to play. Today there is more murder and mayhem. World is a much more dangerous place than it was when she was growing up.

 Who was the oldest relative you remember as a child? What do you remember about them?

Great grandmother on mom’s side, remembers that she was old

 What do you know about your family surname?

Parrish wasn’t family name, it was Droback. It was changed by father but doesn’t know why.

 Is there a naming tradition in your family, such as always giving the firstborn son the name of his paternal grandfather?

Firstborn son received father’s name.

 What stories have come down to you about your parents? Grandparents? More distant ancestors?

Not sure what this question is asking.

Mother’s grandfather worked on the Hoover Dam during construction and fought in Spanish American War, Maternal grandfather in WWI, Father in WWII, Father came through Ellis Island as a child with his parents

 Are there any stories about famous or infamous relatives in your family?

No

 Have any recipes been passed down to you from family members?

No

 Are there any physical characteristics that run in your family?

No

 Are there any special heirlooms, photos, bibles or other memorabilia that have been passed down in your family?

No

 What was the full name of your spouse? Siblings? Parents?

Parents: Clara Pearl Markley, Daniel Louis Parrish,

Siblings: David Michael Maxwell, Steven Forsythe, Daniel Louis Parrish Jr., Donald Richard Parrish, Dennis Eugene Parrish, Delbert Marvin Parrish, Dennis Franklin Rutherford Jr., Dwayne Eddie Parrish

First Spouse – Donald Cicciarelli

Second Spouse – Donald Eugene Marchman

 When and how did you meet your spouse? What did you do on dates?

In a bar in March, 1975. Went to the movies, hung out at the bar and danced, hung out at one or the other’s house

 What was it like when you proposed (or were proposed to)? Where and when did it happen? How did you feel?

Just hanging out at his house, April, 1975. It wasn’t romantic or planned, spur of the moment. Felt stunned because it came out of the blue and so quickly.

 Where and when did you get married?

Courthouse, May 20, 1975

 What memory stands out the most from your wedding day?

Laughing uncontrollably during the ceremony

 How would you describe your spouse? What do (did) you admire most about them?

Unfit for this project

 What do you believe is the key to a successful marriage?

Fidelity/Faithfulness, love

 How did you find out you were going to be a parent for the first time?

Missed period, then felt baby move, never took a pregnancy test

 Why did you choose your children's names?

Michelle – favorite song

Don – after father’s whole family

Sarah – after father’s favorite song at the time

 What was your proudest moment as a parent?

Watching children graduate from high school, watching me win first place in reading in academic Olympics in 6th grade, just watching children grow up and become productive members of society

 What did your family enjoy doing together? Vacations, Disneyland occasionally

 What was your profession and how did you choose it?

Secretary, by default. Couldn’t find work using Linguistic degree so found a job as a secretary because it was readily available.

 If you could have had any other profession what would it have been? Why wasn't it your first choice?

Interpreter, no confidence in self and no money to move to France to truly learn the language.

 Of all the things you learned from your parents, which do you feel was the most valuable?

Doesn’t feel that she learned anything valuable from her parents

 What accomplishments were you the most proud of?

Getting college diploma

 What is the one thing you most want people to remember about you?

Don’t know